

SCIENCE & EDUCATION Impact

Benefits from USDA/Land-Grant Partnership

Learning for the Real World

Innovative courses, real-world experience
prepare Land-Grant students for society, work.

Nothing beats hands-on experience, and Land-Grant university students get plenty. Through a mix of science-based courses, internships, problem-solving and research opportunities, Land-Grant students develop the knowledge, experience and problem-solving skills for the new millennium. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)/Land-Grant university partnership contributes to student success and well-being in many ways.

Payoff

- **Get a job.** Land-Grant graduates are in demand. An **Iowa State** survey found less than 1 percent of bachelor's degree recipients were still looking for work six months after graduation. Six months after graduation, 92 percent of **Purdue's** May agricultural school graduates were employed or pursuing graduate school, while 2 percent weren't seeking employment and 6 percent were job hunting. **South Dakota State's** placement rate has been above 95 percent for the past several years. In **Nebraska**, 68 percent of 1997-98 agricultural college graduates remained in the state to work or study after graduation, adding to the intellectual labor pool.
- **Learning, listening, helping out.** Land-Grant university students gain real-world experience, often through practical projects benefiting communities or businesses. Just ask the folks in Fulton, Missouri, who were warned of an approaching tornado by a storm team of **Missouri** atmospheric sciences students who hunt severe storms to verify what they've learned in the classroom. **Iowa State** design students teamed with Iowa Extension to develop a comprehensive downtown revitalization plan for Clinton, Iowa. The community hired a national consultant to build on the students' plan and uses the students' study in presentations to potential businesses and investors. Engineering students get valuable experience and college credit while businesses get pollution prevention help through **Nebraska's** Partners in Pollution Prevention internship. In 1998, students worked with 70 businesses in seven communities.

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EXTENSION AND
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Reports indicate these businesses could save about \$175,000, keep 2.3 million pounds of waste out of landfills and reduce 3,500 gallons of hazardous waste by implementing student recommendations. **Texas A&M** students are helping plan community parks. One class created a master plan for a 515-acre wilderness park. The city adopted the plan with minor modifications. The local parks and recreation director said the park is a significant part of the community's tourism strategy. As a dairy management class project, **Vermont** students evaluate dairy farming operations and recommend possible improvements, many of which are adopted. Dairy Fellows at **Cornell** also analyze dairy farms and agribusinesses. In **Alabama**, students and faculty from **Tuskegee** teach children in underserved communities about agriculture and environment.

- **Thinking global.** International experience and a world view are increasingly valuable and marketable in today's global environment. To assure students have a global view, Land-Grant universities offer international learning opportunities. **Oklahoma State** engineering students team with counterparts at a Dutch university to solve design problems and students collaborate via the Internet, videoconferences and trade visits. At **Arkansas**, students can earn a "trans-Atlantic" master's degree through a program developed by Arkansas and Scottish Agricultural College agricultural economists. Students from the United States and United Kingdom get a truly international education as they study at each university, working or interning in the host country. To help combat a shortage of bilingual veterinarians with international experience, some veterinary students at **Washington State** learn Spanish and several are interns in Central and South America each year.
- **Stacking the deck for success:** As the "people's universities," Land-Grants ease the transition to college and set the stage for student success. More than 200 Native American students participate in **South Dakota State's** program promoting seamless education during the last two years of high school, two years at a tribal college and two years at the university. The program aims to increase Native American enrollment in agriculture, biological

sciences and family and consumer sciences while honoring Native American cultural values. **North Dakota State's** scholars program for Native Americans studying the food and veterinary sciences aims to develop needed dietetic and veterinary expertise for the region's Native American community and enhance the university's diversity. **Michigan State** is among several Land-Grant universities that created communities of learning and scholarship that partner students with faculty and others in creative learning settings. **Penn State** hosts academically talented high school students interested in agriculture for five weeks of intensive study. Since 1986, all of the program's 704 participants have gone on to college. More than 60 percent have pursued careers in food, agricultural, natural resource and life sciences.

- **Teaming up.** Agriculture colleges team up to share expertise and classes, expanding opportunities for students and stretching resources. In a model for regional cooperation, faculty at **Rutgers, Maryland** and a New Jersey community college are producing interactive software illustrating animal nutrition for the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions. Faculty from **Wisconsin, Purdue, Illinois, Missouri** and **Iowa State** teamed to teach the first distance education class on meat growth and evaluation for 150 midwestern students in 1997.



**Cooperative State Research, Education,
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